

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

PRESIDENT MCCOSH'S PHILOSOPHIC SERIES.

No. II.

ENERGY, EFFICIENT AND FINAL CAUSE. By JAMES MCCOSH, D. D., LL. D., Author of "The Laws of Discursive Thought," etc. Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 53. 1883.

Dr. McCosh has undertaken a series of philosophical tracts for the times. The topics of metaphysical science do not awaken so wide an interest as themes which impose a less severe task upon the intellect of the reader. Yet, at present, philosophical problems are so closely related to the popular studies of natural science, and so involved in the "living questions" which pertain to the origin and end of the world and of man, that a series of papers by so eminent a thinker as Dr. McCosh are likely to receive, as they certainly deserve, a large share of public attention. It is said of Dr. Priestley that when he wished to make up his mind on a subject he wrote a book about it. Dr. McCosh's opinions in philosophy have been too frank and too emphatically announced to render him liable to the suspicion of writing for the purpose of resolving questions for his own personal satisfaction, independently of other considerations which will render an imputation of this sort in his case impossible. It is a familiar experience, however, that there is a gain in clearness and condensation when one writes anew on subjects which one has previously handled in more copious treatises. In truth, an author himself often feels, when he has finished a book, that he is just prepared to write it. The effect of the discussion is to reduce his own thought to its lowest terms, and to disentangle it from surplus and irrelevant matter. The readers of Dr. McCosh's pamphlets will in this way reap the benefit of the author's earlier and more elaborate consideration of the same topics. An adherent, though not a servile adherent, of the Scotch school, he has brought to his inquiries formality and the best powers of a clear and vigorous intellect and of a mind well-informed in the history of speculation. If here was any ground, in respect to his earlier writings, for regarding him as to any extent under the influence of a theological bias, this possible occasion for criticism has more and more disappeared. Certainly he never fails to recognize cordially the merit of the antagonists whom he has to confute, and to give them credit for whatever contributions to science they can fairly lay claim to.

In the essay before us Dr. McCosh takes up the doctrine of causation which, as he truly shows, is involved in most of the processes by which we discern truth. The principle of causality, he points out, is presupposed in most of our convictions as to the past, even in regard to events which rest upon testimony. The law of rational credence depends on the law of causation. Our expectations as to the future are likewise equally dependent on this principle. It is involved, moreover, in the common arguments for the being of God. Hume was, therefore, astute in directing his efforts to the loosening of the bond of causal connection. Next to the Criteria of Truth, the topic of Dr. McCosh's previous tract, this doctrine of causation must, therefore, be treated. First, we have an inquiry into objective or physical causation, or the causal tie in the actual world, aside from our apprehension. Dr. McCosh agrees with Mill that there are two or more acting bodies in all physical causes. This truth he noticed, independently of Mill, although Mill was the first to announce it. He goes beyond Mill in affirming that there is a duality or plurality in the effect as well as in the cause. That one among the plural antecedents of an event which is held to be chiefly important we designate as pre-eminently the "cause." The co-operating agent or agents may then be called the "occasion." The "correlation of forces" is the subject of an important section. While the author accepts this principle as expounded by Tait, Thompson and other scientific authorities, he denies that physical force is translatable into mental, or vice versa, and affirms a direct influence of mind upon matter, as well as of matter upon mind. The attempt of the Agnostics to confute Theism by an unwarranted stretch and application of the doctrine of Conservation is effectively exposed. Under the head of "subjective causation" the intuitive theory is maintained; and Aristotle's classification of causes is reviewed. We are not sure that the interpretation given to the Stagirite's notion of "form" is precisely that which the best critics of his system adopt. The folly of supposing that mechanical causes supersede final causes, or that efficient causation precludes design, is cogently evinced. The remarks upon the views of Professor Newcomb (p. 47, sq.) are one of the most interesting portions of the essay.

While definite and earnest in contending for Theism, Dr. McCosh is cautious in his declarations respecting the will and the relation of volition to causal agency. "There is causation in acts of will," he tells us. On the other hand, he adds, "the will is free." He gives no definition of the epithet "free" in this proposition. He admits the existence of a seeming conflict or autonomy, but does not presume to solve it. Of so much he is sure that the causes which act on the will are not "mechanical or physical." What the difference between the two classes of causes is he does not explain. Two men will act differently in like circumstances, owing to their difference of "character." In every particular act the will is swayed by motives, but the motives are to be found, not out of the mind, but in the mind, may, largely in the will itself" (p. 30). "In the will" must mean habits of will or voluntary principles. The author proceeds: "The causes which sway the will are mainly in our nature and character, in our dispositions and habits, which our own wills have been forming." These statements correspond pretty nearly to the doctrine of J. S. Mill. They really evade instead of meeting the difficulty. The question at once arises, Was the will in forming these "dispositions and habits" free—that is, except from the sway of motives? If not, the difficulty is not in the least removed, but only pushed back. Dr. McCosh evidently is not prepared to abandon the Determinism of Edwards and Chalmers; but he is too candid to conceal from himself and from his readers the perplexities induced by it. He allows that the notion of power springs up in the mind from the exertion of our own voluntary agency coupled with the sense of muscular resistance. But the universality of the causal principle in the material realm leads him to hesitate about accepting the will, the primal seat of causal efficiency, from its sway.

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